



Ambassador John Berry – submission to The Australian newspaper

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**A Year of Action**  
**Ambassador Berry in *The Australian* newspaper**

*(As submitted – January 30, 2014)*

Like President Obama, I am looking forward to 2014 as a year of action. Whether it is supporting Australia's leadership of the G20, moving forward on trade negotiations, deepening our historic alliance, or conserving the world around us, I have no doubt that the U.S.-Australia partnership will emerge from 2014 stronger than ever.

Back in October, when the United States government shut down, many wondered about our future and our staying power in the Asia-Pacific. I'm pleased to report that we have turned the page and are looking forward to an exciting year.

This will be possible in part because of the good news coming out of the United States. Our government is showing signs of improving bipartisanship and renewed focus on addressing national challenges. On December 26, the President signed a \$1.012 trillion budget that protects our national security, advances national priorities, and continues the trend of reducing the deficit faster than at almost any time since World War II. Congress has already approved next year's budget number, guaranteeing our government's operations for the next two years.

Even more importantly, the worst of the global financial crisis is now behind us. As President Obama noted in his State of the Union address, housing starts are up and the market is rebounding, banks are lending again, manufacturing jobs are increasing for the first time in more than two decades, and unemployment is in decline. More than 8 million jobs have been created since the worst days of the recession, and although unemployment is still higher than we'd like, the December 2013 rate of 6.7% represents a five year low.

The Federal Reserve has begun the delicate task of ending quantitative easing, and while we are seeing some reaction in the stock markets, it is being done in a measured and responsible way that keeps careful watch on its effect on the rest of the world.

On the energy front, through both the "shale gas revolution" and conservation measures, such as increasing the fuel efficiency standards for vehicles, we are on track to be almost entirely energy independent by 2035. A decreased reliance on coal has resulted in our lowest CO2 emissions in 20 years. Per capita emissions are lower than at any time since 1961.

Things are looking bright, both at home and abroad. From trade and investment to security and conservation, we are —as President Obama said — "all in" on our commitments in the Asia-Pacific generally, and in Australia in particular.



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Since our free trade agreement went into effect in 2005, trade has more than doubled between the United States and Australia. We are the largest foreign investor in Australia, and our bilateral trade and investment relationship means more jobs, more goods, and a higher standard of living for Australians and Americans.

Like Australia, the United States is actively developing stronger economic relationships with other key countries in the Asia Pacific like China, Indonesia, Vietnam, Japan, and Korea. This year's G20 in Australia and the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation Forum in China both will be opportunities to further strengthen those relationships.

At the heart of our shared commitment to building prosperity in the region is the Trans Pacific Partnership. Together with 10 other countries, the United States and Australia are negotiating the TPP to bring down barriers to trade and investment and to open markets. Importantly, the agreement will also include strong protections for workers, the environment, intellectual property, and innovation. It will set the standards for trade in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Australia's businesses and farmers will have greater access to a trading area that together produces 40% of the world's GDP, creating more and better jobs for Australians. The TPP is open to new members, and we would welcome other countries in the region ready to commit to the TPP's high standards.

We are moving forward in rebalancing our security posture as well, which is why we will have 60 percent of our naval assets in the Pacific by 2020. This year, the number of Marines conducting rotational training in Darwin will increase to approximately 1000. We will continue joint training exercises in the region – not only with Australia, but with Indonesia, the Philippines, Japan, and South Korea. For the first time, China will participate in this year's Rim of the Pacific exercise, led by the U.S. Pacific Fleet. These exercises foster understanding and enable us to better respond to any crisis in the Pacific and to work together seamlessly after natural and humanitarian disasters.

Discussions about trade and security only scratch the surface of our deep and broad partnership, however. For example, we are working together on issues of conservation that are vitally important. Leading researchers in the United States – including from the National Zoo in Washington – are working with Australian scientists to find a cure for Tasmanian devil facial tumor disease. We are also maintaining insurance populations at the San Diego Zoo and at New Mexico's BioPark through the Save the Tasmanian Devil Program. Together, we hope to ensure the survival of one of Australia's most iconic creatures.

We are also working together to protect crucial – but easily overlooked – krill, the foundation of the food chain in the Southern Ocean. We study climate change and maritime conservation in Antarctica. We work together to study near space and planets both in and beyond our solar system.



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Finally, we are engaged in a robust program of exchanges. For more than sixty years, young Fulbright scholars have worked on a range of projects, such as managing bushfires, protecting tropical rivers, and controlling malaria, making the world a better place for all of us.

All of these bilateral efforts reflect a dynamic partnership that is prepared to meet shared challenges head on. 2014 will be a very busy year, culminating in the G20 summit in Brisbane. I look forward to working closely with our Australian friends to deepen the alliance and increase cooperation with allies and partners all over the Asia-Pacific region.